**Enabling Music Therapy Students to Thrive in their Studies
by Pursuing Their Passion as a Research Interest -** Liz Coombes and Beth Pickard, FLSE

This poster explores the variety of interests that may be developed as research projects for the dissertation assignment by MA Music Therapy students at the University of South Wales. It speculates on the importance of following one’s passion in this work, suggesting this is an important part of meaningful research. Both academic supervisors discuss briefly how their own passion has shaped their research interests, before considering whether and to what extent this is apparent in student research projects.

Bruscia (1995) gives the following definition of research: “a systematic, self-monitored inquiry which leads to a discovery or new insight, which, when documented and disseminated, contributes to or modifies existing knowledge or practice” (p. 21). Ansdell and Pavlicevic (2000) suggest that practitioners may do well to select an area of personal interest for their enquiry, as this may prove a motivation and inspiration to the endeavour.

Areas of research interests amongst students and professionals are often those which arouse a personal as well as professional interest.  When music therapy students begin to develop their own therapeutic personas, it can be important for them to recognise and work with those areas of practice which stimulate interest for them personally (Burns and Meadows 2017).

Consideration is given to academic supervisors’ own areas of research interest and how this is articulated and shared through the teaching process, before reviewing the areas of research interest explored by students, in their own words, and their relevance to their personalities and therapeutic identities.

As academic supervisors, we have noticed that it is often pre-existing interests, passions, if you will, that evoke the most effective and considered dissertation submissions. Having considered the impact of our own research interests on our teaching and clinical practice, a selection of student projects will be presented and explored in the poster to illustrate this position.

Keywords:  research, students, training, identity, music therapy

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**Developing a Meaningful Community of Practice: The Challenges and Opportunities of Revalidating a Degree Programme in Creative and Therapeutic Arts -** Beth Pickard, FLSE

This poster will encapsulate some of the challenges and opportunities recognised through critical reflection and review of the trajectory and development of the BA(Hons) Creative and Therapeutic Arts over the past five years, as well as the exciting innovations recognised in developing the curriculum in an evidence based and student-informed revalidation activity. The history of the course will be briefly summarised to provide context to the revalidation activity, before presenting with the theoretical context to contemporary participatory arts practice. This will include exploration of the complementary and contrasting approaches of socially engaged art practice (Helguera, 2011; Thompson, 2012), inclusive arts practice (Fox and Macpherson), participatory arts practice (Matarasso, 2013; ArtWorks Cymru, 2015), arts in health (Fancourt, 2017) and therapeutic arts or art therapy (Rogers, 2000; Clements, Hughes and Stiller, 2015).

The challenge of defining a diverse practice which draws from such rich and colourful perspectives is insightfully discussed by Swindells *et al.* (2016) and will be further touched upon in relation to the specific context of the course. The geographical context of the programme will also be considered, drawing from Welsh (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014, 2015; Donaldson, 2015) and UK (Department of Health, 2008, 2011) policy which demonstrates the relevance and value of this creative practice to strategic wellbeing agendas as well as USW policies on practice based, inclusive learning (USW, 2014, 2016) .

The curriculum design will be contextualised in relation to experiential learning pedagogy (Mortimer, 2017) and inclusive practice literature (Grace and Gravestock, 2009; HEA, 2011), as well as relevant higher education policies (QAA, 2014; QAA, 2017). Critical discussion and questions around the future of the training and the discipline more broadly will be stimulated and encouraged, to further nurture and challenge future educators and practitioners in this exciting area of practice.

Keywords: revalidation, curriculum, pedagogy, community, inclusive, arts

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**Faculty of Business and Society - School of Law, Accounting and Finance pledge**

As part of the Autumn Learning and Teaching conference pledge, the School of Law, Accounting and Finance is working towards improving undergraduate student confidence and aspirations, which in turn (we hope) will have a positive impact on first time pass rates – a metric that the School has a red RAG rating across some levels of its professionally accredited courses.

Five members of staff form part of the working group that has been tasked with leading this project. Each member of the group is working with different partners (students / staff / Employability and Development team / Financial and Professional Services Sector) who have been identified as stakeholders and who can contribute to and inform the project.

The proposal is to embed employability within the School curriculum. It is proposed that this is done by identifying key skills that are required at each level and building upon these over a three year period. At Level 4 it is proposed that we introduce an ‘employability’ element into existing Level 4 immersive learning modules that focus on: time management, engagement and confidence building, all factors that the team feel are contributing to our poor first time pass rates. Thereafter laying the foundations for the employability / work placement modules to build upon at Level 5, culminating in a more focused approach at level 6 on graduate recruitment. We will, as a school, commit to a dedicated staff resource and time on workload to implement these plans.

The School is currently working on the module modifications that need to be made in order to embed this project across the law, accounting and finance curriculum with a view to delivery from September 2018.